5/5/67

Dear Mr. Fremont-Smith,

Before again plunging into my writing, I do want to reply to your letter of May 3. I have just returned from New Orleans, where I believe I was the only writer in the field called by the grand jury (which I believe will come to be regarded as a fortunate accident in our history, they are men of that caliber). Before going there I finished the draft of my own book, CIA WHITEWASH: OSWALD IN NEW ORLEANS. I am not ashamed that I am ahead of the headlines again, or that the headlines of that city are just beginning to catch up with what I wrote more than two years ago - entirely alone of those published -and entirely without credit. There are two more specialized aspects of the case on which my work is well along that I would like to finish in about two more intensive months of work, other circumstances permitting.

Had you done what you say you intended, I could not quarrel with you. Obviously, you cannot read everything, although on a subject like this one might expect you'd want to read the first, as others on the New York Times did the previous year. My complaint is that you made judgements without basis and awarded credit without knowledge. In its simplest form, you judged my first and second books unworthy of even listing whereas the New York Times with the first alone found interest in 14 copies of which I know, before Epstein's was out. Your judgement was based on no knowledge. It was the result of prejudice, as you have honestly confessed, compounding the lack of freedom of the press I suffered.

You have also awarded credit to what I earlier did more completely and more definitively, to others. This did and does hurt me. Such is the nature of the power you wield. You are without qualification, as you honestly acknowledge, for the judgements you did make of other works, yet you made them. Because they are not factually accurate, again you hurt me, regardless of your intent or its purity. While it is true that you cannot read everything, it is also true that unless you do you cannot fairly make the statements and award the credits you did.

The essence of Epstein's work is in mine. You may prefer his enlargement of it, but it adds nothing reliable or essential or, in truth, dependable, because it is fiercely partisan, whether or not you detected it. Should you desire, sometime when I'm in New York I'd be happy to show you this. He assumes the correctness of the Commission's work without evaluating it, and knows, actually, little of the evidence and on the few occasions on which he eludes to it is both remarkably wrong and remarkably unfair. This you cannot know unless you know the subject. On the autopsy he is particualrly wrong, and what you had no way of knowing is that I backstopped him with his publisher. Were my work not behind his, his would have survived in hardback even a shorter while. It is not in itself viable.

Popkin's is an astounding concept, and I'm surprised you did not see fit to comment on what he did. His scholarship is nonexistent. He knows so little of the subject Loren Eugene Hall, one of the men in the story of my "False Oswald", comes out in his transparency as Mrs. Loren Hall! His is so divorced from the real work his wife described as his greatest gratification the gift to him of my own work taken from me and given to him by others! I cannot now go farthur without

making charges that, on this subject, I have avoided making. However, because your field is books and the publishing industry, should you want an off the record discussion, I will be glad to have this with you some time when you are in available and I am in New York, and I promise to give you the possibility of checking things for yourself. You will not have to depend upon my word.

Two of the things I have sought to do I had hoped with find, at least among the critics and reviewers, sympathetic understanding. It is no easy thing for a writer to undertake a private printing, especially when he is without funds or resources other than his reputation, and especially on such a subject. Yet I believe you will ultimately come to realize that it is my work that really opened the field for others. It is, as you have honestly admitted, because you joined in the publishers' boycott that you also boycotted it. In your position, your judgement should be of different origin. I do not think this makes for a healthy publishing industry or that it encourages other ~~writer~~ writers to attempt what I did.

I also have sought to make books more present, more current, and it is more than possible. We can do this with other subjects than "Candy". I had hoped the man in your position would welcome this effort. This subject addresses the integrity of our society, as you will learn if you do not now believe it. I had a viable and the most ekhaustive book completed in mid-February 1965. The 26 volumes were then available for but three months. I dery you to show me the equal in speed or scholarship, as of today. Collectively all the other books do no have half the content of mine, meaning my first. Collectively they have nothing important not in it. They do have differences in emphasis. This, I believe, is a not inconsiderable accomplishment. Without knowing whether or not it was so, you blithely credited others with what I had done, simply because you did not know. I can understand how you did not know. What I have difficulty understanding is how, without knowing, you made the assumptions you did and awarded the credits you did.

It is only because you exercise the power you do, and I cannot believe you have come into it without earning it, that I have addressed you as bluntly as I have -not for the purpose of insult - for I cannot believe you intended what has resulted. If I had, I would have ignored you as I have others, for I try to restrict myself to constructive purposes. There is only so much time one man has. I have undertaken a large task, and to the best of my ability I will accomplish it. History will judge its integrity and effect, if reviewers do not. Whether or not I succeed, and I think I have and I will, despite the obstacles, it is of a magnitude that nothing, particularly Manchester's work, approaches. Suspend your judgement on this until you have a chance to see for yourself, as I think before too long you will.

Please believe me, I do not attribute malicious intent to you. If I did, again I'd not take the time from my work for correspondence. Perhaps it is that I think you are a tremenduously powerful man, even more powerful than you may conceive, and that you do not use this important power as well as you might and are capable of.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg